

## a thousand gray glimmers into the deeper green by darlingargents

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**Summary:**

Bill builds a family.

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### Author's Note:

- For [opheliahyde](#).

Title from *From the Notebooks of Anne Verveine* by Rosanna Warren.

Warning for mentions of animal death. (Wildlife and rodents, no pets.)

Georgie died two weeks before Halloween. On the thirty-first, Bill sits at his bedroom window, watching the children in the streets as darkness begins to fall. Giggles and shrieks are audible through his closed window, and as he watches, a boy Georgie's age dressed as a ghost runs after his older sister. His foot catches the edge of the bedsheet and he falls, and Bill's heart skips a beat. The sister turns around, helps him up, and holds his hand.

He resolutely doesn't think about the costume hanging in Georgie's closet, that he'd been so excited to wear, and how Bill had rolled his eyes every time Georgie had begged Bill to take him trick-or-treating. He would have taken him. He would have, but Georgie didn't know that, and now he never will.

Bill goes to bed early, but it takes a long time for him to fall asleep. The sounds of laughter, screaming, and faint music don't fully quiet until long past midnight.

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Bill wakes up at just past two in the morning, as suddenly and completely as if he'd been slapped in the face. His eyes open, staring into the weak gray shapes of his room, and he fumbles for the light. His heart is pounding, and he recalls the Halloween legend — on this one night, the boundary between the living and the dead is worn thin. It's just horror movie nonsense, but for some reason it feels true, down in his bones.

Ghosts aren't real, he knows, but as he gets out of bed and grabs a flashlight from his desk, his heart is still beating out of his chest and his stomach is going cold. None of this feels like a choice; he's not moving his feet, something else is. He walks to the door, opens it, and the squeaky hinge — which normally screams the whole time the door is in motion — is silent, masking his movements.

He crosses the hall to Georgie's room, and sees that the door — which had been firmly shut the night before — is ajar. A faint light shines out the bottom and through the gap, a cold white light, the opposite of warm and inviting. He doesn't need the flashlight, but he holds it anyway in his left hand, clutching it so tightly it almost hurts. His skin is clammy with cold sweat, and he wants nothing more than to be in bed right now, asleep, but he's here, his hand reaching for Georgie's door.

The door swings open under his hand, and Georgie is sitting on the bed.

Bill hadn't realized that his left hand had been lifted, holding the flashlight like a weapon, ready to throw. His fingers release and the flashlight falls to the carpet, rolling across the floor to Georgie's bare feet.

Georgie is... right there. He's wearing the same clothes as he was wearing when he disappeared, except his boots are gone, his feet bare and the soles black with dirt. His yellow raincoat is torn, streaked with something dark — mud, probably, but maybe something else as well. And one of the sleeves is gone, and one of his arms, too. There's a stump there — clean and healed now, but Bill knows down to his core that Georgie's arm was ripped off.

Bill's eyes scan up from the flashlight at Georgie's feet, to his raincoat, to his arm — and now his eyes reach Georgie's face. It's his little brother, and it's not. His eyes are a dull, glowing red, the colour of congealed blood. And there's something dark smeared on his cheeks and around his mouth.

Bill looks at Georgie, and Georgie smiles, exactly like he did when Bill handed him the boat. Except the blood — *it's blood, it's blood, how is it blood* — around his mouth starts to crinkle and flake off, and a

fresh trickle runs down his chin, and his teeth — *his teeth oh god what is that what is that* — are bright white, smeared with crimson, and his canines end in sharp points.

“Billy,” he says, “Billy, I missed you,” and it’s not even a choice. Bill steps forward, and Georgie wraps his one arm around Bill’s waist, and Bill is crying when Georgie’s razor-sharp baby teeth sink into his neck.



Grimy fingers are forcing his mouth open and blood is dripping onto his tongue. It’s coppery and the smell is nauseating, but Bill’s mouth is forced shut before he can spit it out, by tiny fingers that are far stronger than they should be. He chokes and swallows it down like a strange medicine. He sees red eyes over him, and he tries to move his arms, to brush Georgie’s hair out of his face, but they’re too heavy. His eyes close and he falls again.



Richie is reading a comic with a flashlight at some point past midnight when something *pings* against his window. He tosses the comic onto the floor and jumps off his bed quietly — he’s pretty sure he couldn’t wake his parents if he tried, but he doesn’t want to risk it. He crosses the room as there’s another *ping* and yep, someone’s definitely throwing pebbles at the window.

He pulls it open and sticks his head out, the frosty air waking him up immediately. There’s a tree under his window and a streetlamp right in front of his house, but he can’t see anyone below. “Eddie?” he calls quietly.

A pair of eyes open under the tree, bright red and glowing, and Richie jumps, his head bashing into the window. “Shit!” he says, too loud, and the eyes move from under the shadow of the tree to stand directly below the window.

It’s Bill. He’s wearing pajamas and he’s covered in mud and dirt. His bare arms are white and muddy, his hair is matted with dirt, and his eyes — god, his eyes are glowing, like a fucking raccoon in the

headlights. There's something dark smeared around his mouth, and that doesn't look like dirt. Richie is cold down to the skin, his fingers almost numb on the window ledge, and it's not just the fact that it's cold outside.

"Richie," Bill says, and his voice sounds like silver bells chiming together, so beautiful that Richie can't believe it came from someone who looks like they sleepwalked through a ditch filled with mud to get here. "Come down."

He opens his mouth to tell Bill to fuck off and let him sleep, but the words don't come out. "Just a minute," he says, and pulls his head back into his room. He's only in boxers and it's a fucking freezing November night, so he pulls on socks, jeans, and the first shirt he sees on the floor before he goes downstairs. He shoves his feet half into his sneakers and goes out the back door.

It's still really fucking cold on his bare arms as he walks around to the front, but Richie finds himself not caring. He wants to be near Bill.

In the front yard, Bill is admiring his mother's flower bed. It's mostly dead now, but Bill still picks off one of the petals as Richie walks up to him. He lifts it to his face and looks at it with those glowing eyes. They're beautiful, Richie thinks. How did they scare him? They're so beautiful.

"Bill," he says, and Bill drops the petal. He looks at Richie, and smiles, and yes, that's blood on his teeth and around his mouth. That should be terrifying. It's not.

"Richie," he says. "Are you ready?"

"Sure, Big Bill. Where were you? You were missing." It was a big thing at school, and Richie had been really scared. The second Denbrough child, disappeared on Halloween night. He and Eddie and Stan hadn't talked about the empty space at their lunch table and in their classes. It had felt too big, too terrible to speak.

"I'm okay. Will you come with me?"

“Sure. Wherever.”

Bill grabs his hand. His fingers are cold and when Richie looks down at his hand, he sees that all of his nails are broken. Something inside him is going cold with a terror as old as time, but mostly he’s just thinking about Bill. About how he’d follow him anywhere.

“Let’s go,” Bill says.

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It’s quick, with Eddie. Richie breaks the lock of his front door with strength he’s still learning to use, and Bill clamps a hand over his mouth to wake him. He screams against Bill’s palm and Richie lays a hand on his stomach, leaning in close. His eyes are beautiful, his pupils blown wide with terror; Richie will miss them when they turn red.

He turns Eddie as Bill holds him down and it feels like absolution, his lips on Eddie’s skin. Not the way he wanted, not before — but it feels more right than anything he’s ever done. And Eddie’s blood is so very, very sweet.

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Eddie insists — *insists* — that they find a house with a shower. He refuses to stay covered in grave-dirt and blood. Bill rolls his eyes at Richie behind Eddie’s back as he hysterically lists the dangerous parts of the Neibolt house, but he’s not entirely wrong. They find another abandoned house, only a few blocks over, and move in.

It does feel good, Richie has to admit as he showers off the grave dirt and the blood from his first few feedings. (Maybe they’ll get better in time, but all of them are very messy eaters so far.) If they’re going to live forever — and they’re vampires, he’s fairly certain, so that seems likely — they should find a way to live in civilized society. Or at least look like they belong.

Georgie wasn’t a fan of the idea. He only got in the shower after Bill promised him his own deer and found a rat for him to drink from first. He’s still a child, and he always will be. It’s almost unfortunate.

Being thirteen forever isn't what Richie would have chosen, but it's a lot better than six.

(Georgie hasn't said who turned him. From what Bill has said, Richie's fairly certain that he doesn't even know. Just someone passing through Derry, maybe.)

They put blackout curtains on all the windows, Eddie breaks into a few surrounding houses and steals some furniture, and they build a home.

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Once they're settled, Stan is next. Richie feels bad for leaving him this long — it's mid-December now, the snow is falling, and his last friend vanished almost three weeks before — but he's sure Stan will be grateful once he's turned.

He is, and he immediately jumps on Eddie's team regarding their living conditions. Between the two of them spending half the night cleaning and decorating instead of looking for food, it's becoming the nicest place Richie has ever lived. Their style might not win any interior design awards, but it's nice, and Richie finds that he really likes it.

A few weeks into this strange existence, Stan offers up a suggestion for someone to add to their family. "The new kid," he says. "He's in my English class. He doesn't have any friends. Maybe he'd feel at home here."

Without meaning to, all of them look at Bill. He's the leader of their family, or whatever it is — they never talked about it, but they all accept it. He thinks for a moment, and then looks at Georgie. "What do you think?" he asks.

Georgie shrugs, and Bill leans down to wipe some blood off his cheek. They're all messy eaters still, but Georgie is the only one who still forgets to wash off after feeding. "If you want to, Billy," he says, and Bill nods.

"Tomorrow night."

It's Stan's first turning, and it's just him and Bill that night. Before he joined them, the others had tried lots of things with their powers and found all kinds of neat tricks, and Stan picked them up quickly. They can convince humans to do almost anything without much effort at all — which is how all of them were turned willingly. And if they concentrate, they can go fast and silently enough that no one will see them. It's useful for getting around at night and getting into movies for free.

They find the new kid's house near downtown, a small house on the corner of a street. Stan peers into every window until he sees the sleeping face of the new kid, and then Bill breaks the lock on the back door and they walk in. The kid's bedroom is covered in posters and old pictures, and Stan finds himself looking at one of them as Bill covers the kid's mouth and wakes him up. It's a picture of the circus, and one of the clowns keeps drawing his eye.

"Stan," Bill says quietly, and Stan joins him, holding down the kid's wrists. "Don't scream," Bill says, and uncovers the kid's mouth. He stays quiet, his gaze bouncing rapidly between Bill and Stan like he's watching a tennis match. "What's your name?"

He blinks. "What?"

"Your name," Stan says. "What is it?"

"Ben," he says. "Are you — Bill Denbrough? And Stanley Uris? You both disappeared."

"Yes," Bill says patiently. "If you'd like to come with us, you can disappear as well."

"I don't — I don't want to disappear," Ben says. He's pale and shaking, and Stan lifts his hands from Ben's wrists. He's not going to bolt.

"You can come live with my family," Bill says. "There's lots of us, and it's really fun."

"Uh..."



“It is,” Stan adds.

“I don’t. I don’t know.”

Bill sighs, and glances at Stan. “We’ve come all this way. Come on. Wouldn’t you like some new friends?”

Ben is still trembling, but he doesn’t look quite so afraid. He sits up in bed and looks both of them in the eyes. The red doesn’t seem to bother him quite so much.

“All right,” he says.

Bill nods at Stan, and Stan leans in to latch onto Ben’s neck.

Bill had told him on the way over how to turn someone: drink, but not too much. Feed them a few drops of your blood. And bury them — it didn’t have to be deep. Ben’s blood tastes delicious, like most humans, and Stan finds himself drinking a little deeper than he meant to before Bill taps his shoulder. *Hurry up*. He breaks away and Ben slumps into his arms, unconscious.

“Let’s go,” Bill says, and lifts Ben easily into his arms.

They bury him under the apple tree in the backyard of their house, a bit of Stan’s blood on his tongue. The next night, he rises, and joins their family.

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The final two additions to their family happen in rapid succession. Eddie suggests a friend of his, a homeschooled kid on a farm a little outside Derry, and Ben timidly asks about Beverly Marsh. The two of them are turned within a few nights of each other, and as winter turns to spring, their house finally feels full.

Bill’s family is complete, and he couldn’t be happier.

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“I’ve been researching vampires,” Ben says one evening. (Morning, actually — it’s just starting to get light out — but in their house, that

means the beginning of the time for rest.) Mike looks up from his book, mildly interested.

“So,” Ben continues, “I think there have been vampires in Derry for a long time. Or maybe just one. The whole original colony, that vanished? They had written about ‘bloodsuckers’ in their journals and town newspaper. Apparently some of their livestock vanished or were found drained of blood, and a few children were taken, before all of them vanished.”

“Do you think that’s the one that turned Georgie?”

“Maybe. There have been a lot of unexplained disappearances in Derry for most of its history. Some of the bodies were found with bite marks.”

“That’s pretty messed up,” Richie adds, poking his head into the room. “Why can’t they just hunt deer? There are way too many deer in Maine, I saw it on TV one time. We’re doing a public service here. And not killing people.”

“Why was Georgie different?” Mike asks. “I mean, do you think this vampire — or vampires, whatever — meant to turn him, or was it an accident?”

“I don’t know.” Ben frowns at his notebook. “I might do a research project.”

“Of course you’d do that for fun, Haystack. Anyway, you two, come downstairs, we’re playing spin the bottle.”

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Mike starts a garden out back in early spring. He and Ben do research together on night-blooming flowers that might grow in their climate, and do whatever they can to access the seeds. Ben doesn’t like gardening, but he likes research, and Mike likes growing things. He’s always had a green thumb, and he’s hopeful that he can continue to use it, even if he himself is undead. Bringing life into the world, instead of just death.

“Sounds lame,” Richie says when Ben mentions it, and Stan rolls his

eyes behind Richie's back. "Me and Eds are going to steal some arcade games for the basement. Wanna help?"

"Maybe later," Mike says, amused, and Richie grabs Eddie's hand and they head out into the night. Stan offers his help, and mentions his own hobby of late — bird-watching — and how maybe they'd get more birds around the house if they have a garden. Mike agrees.

The garden is slow-going, but it starts to come together over a few weeks. Stan occasionally helps, or just sits nearby watching their birdbath (stolen, of course, by Richie.) Bev has been honing her art skills, and sometimes she shows up when they're watering and planting to draw the flowers. She sketches Ben and Mike leaning over the plots of dirt, mud on their hands and smiles on their faces, their sharp teeth poking out of their mouths. Ben is practically glowing when she gifts him a good one: him cradling a flowerpot, a rose growing out the top, smiling down at it, and Mike thinks it's the sweetest thing he's ever seen. Bev gives him one, too, and he finds himself practically glowing as well.

Bev's art starts to go up all over the house. Bill riding his bike, Georgie on the back; Richie and Eddie in the hammock they set up in the backyard; Stan with his binoculars; herself standing over the canal, hair and dress rippling in the wind. And a gorgeous one, full of colour, goes over the fireplace: all eight of them, in Victorian clothes, posed like an ancient family portrait, their vampire teeth poking out, and smiling.

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"What the *fuck* is this?" Eddie shrieks. They all flinch back as one — even Georgie, who usually doesn't pay much attention to anyone but Bill.

"Actually, I'm wondering the same," Stan adds timidly. "Couldn't you have done this outside?"

"You ruined my fucking kitchen!"

"It's not like you need to cook anything," Richie says, and dodges the potato masher that Eddie throws at him.

Richie kind of understands why Eddie is upset. Bill always bribes Georgie with deer when he needs him to do something, and apparently Bill took this one down too close to sunrise to eat it in the yard. So Georgie ate it in the kitchen. There's blood on every single surface, splatters and sprays and blotches; there's globs of it dripping off the ceiling. And Eddie is *furios* .

"I don't really like it, either," Bev manages. She'd been upstairs drawing, and she pokes her head into the kitchen from behind the others. "It's a little... stereotypical? Can't we keep our house nice? Do we have any self-control?"

"Apparently not." Eddie sniffs and turns around. "We're cleaning it. Now."

Everyone groans.

"Come *on*."

It's a team effort, and even Georgie helps a little bit. By a couple hours later, the only thing wrong in the kitchen is the newspapers in the corner wrapped around something suspicious. It's far past dawn, and they head to bed.



The thing about vampires, Richie has discovered, is that they're rather different from their past selves. Their old personalities are still there, but under the surface, and they're all a lot more charismatic, mysterious, and prone to anger.

They also have far fewer inhibitions in general, and very few hangups on taboo or concerns of what others think of them.

Those things combined are the reason that Richie kisses Eddie, in the middle of spring, a few weeks after Beverly joins their family.

They're on their way home from hunting when Eddie smiles at him, and Richie just... does it, without a thought, in the middle of the street. Eddie still has blood on his lips, and Richie licks it off as he pulls away. Eddie is still smiling.

“What was that for?” he asks.

“I love you,” Richie says, and it’s the truest thing he’s ever said.

“Hm.” Eddie licks the last bits of blood off his lips, thinking, and nods. “Yes, I love you too.”

“That’s good,” Richie says, and kisses him again. And again. And again.

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Richie loves Eddie, he knows, but he thinks he might love Bill, as well. And Stan — he’s always cared about Stan, and maybe he loves him as well. He doesn’t know Mike, Ben, or Beverly that well yet, but maybe he loves them, too.

They have their own little world in this house. They fight sometimes, but they all care for each other, and maybe if they all love each other, it’ll be a little bit easier. And a much better way to spend eternity, in his opinion.

He kisses Bill a few nights after he first kisses Eddie, in front of everyone. There’s a moment of pause, and Bill raises a brow at him.

“Why?” he asks, and Richie shrugs.

“Isn’t it better?”

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Yes, it turns out. Eternity is much better when you’re in love with everyone you’re spending it with. (Everyone but Georgie, but they’re all content to love him as a little brother.)

The green spring goes on and on, and the rest of time is in front of them. And they’ll be together.